



# **VOTER ENGAGEMENT BASICS FOR NONPROFITS**

August 12, 2010





# AGENDA

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- Overview of Nonprofit Voter Engagement
  - Why voting?
  - Why nonprofits?
- Activity Areas
  - Making Your Plan
  - Dos and Don'ts
  - Voter Reg, Voter Ed, GOTV



# WHY VOTING?

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- Stronger, healthier communities
- Public policies that represent our communities
- Clout for your organization



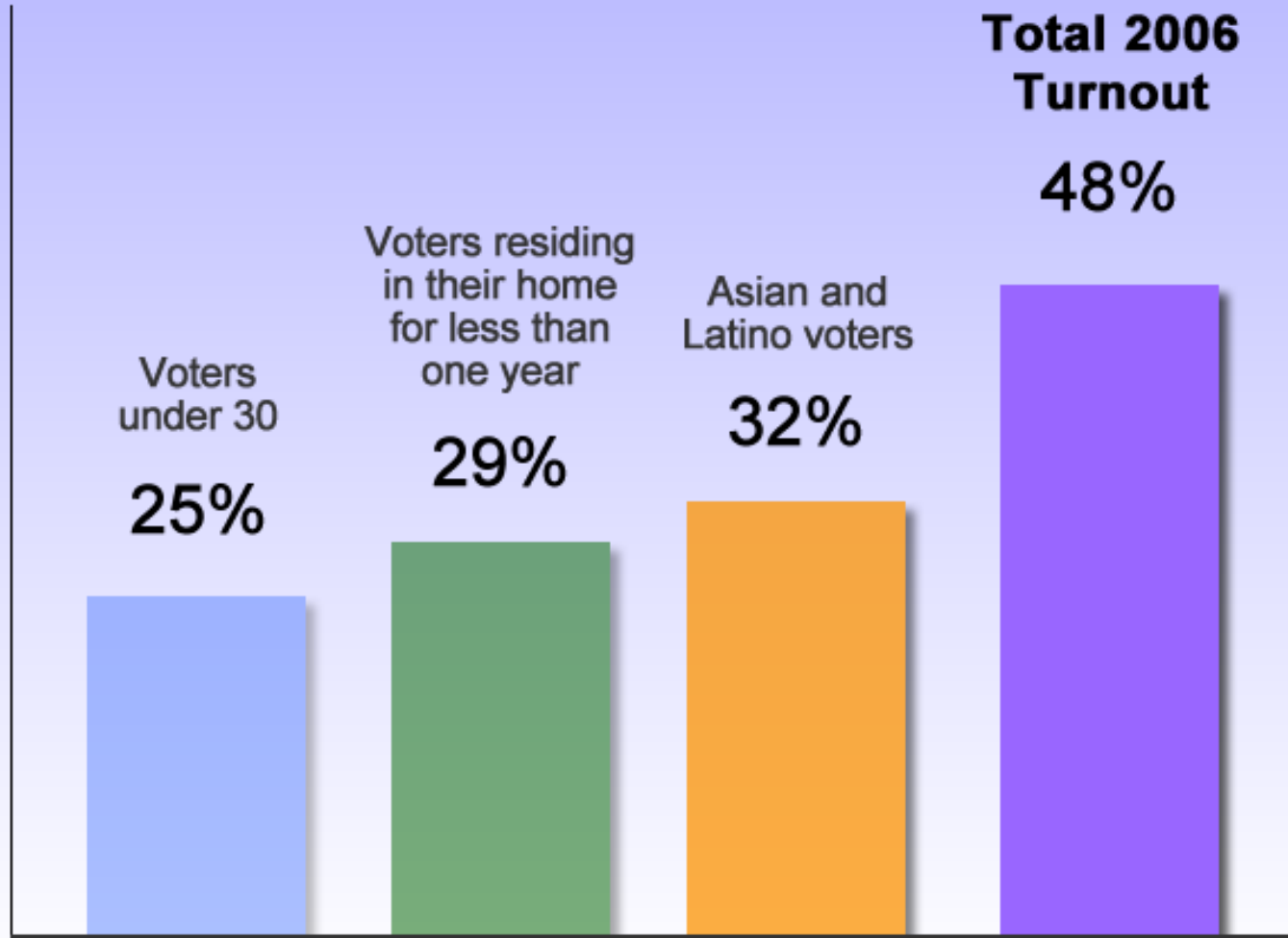
# WHY VOTING?

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- Safe
- Easy
- Important



## Voter Turnout in the 2006 Midterm Election



# WHY NONPROFITS?.....

- Size of our sector
- Trust of our communities
- Access to underrepresented populations
- Social missions
- Interest in good government
- Nonpartisanship





# YOU are the Trusted Voices in Your Communities





# EXPANDING DEMOCRACY

- What we know about creating new voters
  - Personal contact
  - Repeat messages from multiples sources
  - Voting is a habit



# PLAN FIRST!



# **WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?**.....

1. As we walk through this webinar, think about which activities can be most easily integrated into YOUR work?



# **WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?.....**

2. Get buy in and keep it simple



# WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?.....

3. Determine who the point person is in your organization



# WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?.....

4. Plan around voting deadlines  
in your state





# WHAT'S YOUR PLAN?.....

5. Decide on key partners



# EXECUTING YOUR PLAN.....

- Know Your Audience
  - Your service population or constituents
  - Staff, board members and volunteers
  - Your neighborhood or local community



# EXECUTING YOUR PLAN...

- Where Can You Integrate Voter Engagement Into Your Work?
  - Conversations at point of service
  - Classes and trainings
  - Meetings
  - Community events
  - Materials in your agency's lobby



# EXECUTING YOUR PLAN.....

- What are your communications vehicles?
  - In person, face to face is always best



# EXECUTING YOUR PLAN...

- What Are Your Communication Vehicles?
  - Information in your agency's lobby
  - Signage and posters
  - Website
  - Printed newsletters
  - E-newsletters
  - Social media
  - T-shirts



# **STAYING NONPARTISAN**

The IRS places only one restriction (or opportunity) on nonprofits doing voter engagement work





# **STAYING NONPARTISAN**

A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization may NOT support or oppose a candidate for public office or a political party.

That means no endorsements or rating of candidates



# STAYING NONPARTISAN

- What CAN you do?
  - Nonprofits may conduct nonpartisan voter engagement activities designed to educate the public and help them participate in elections
    - Voter Registration
    - Voter Education
    - Get Out The Vote (GOTV)



# WHAT STAFF CAN DO.....

Nonprofit staff MAY engage in partisan political activities on their own time, off the clock.



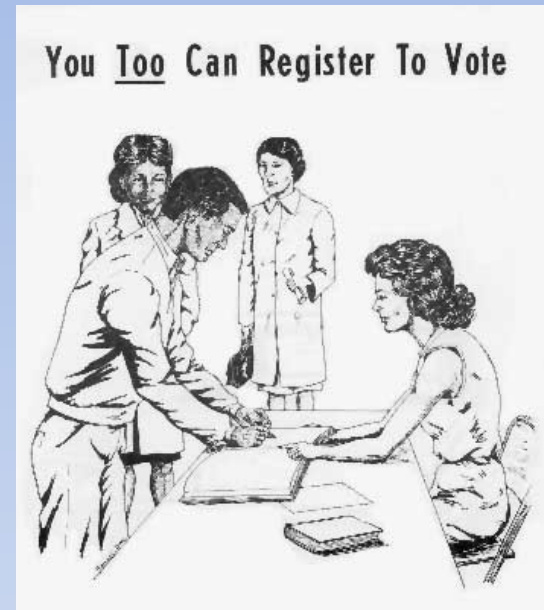
# **VOTER ENGAGEMENT.....**

- Step 1: Voter Registration
- Step 2: Voter Education
- Step 3: Get Out The Vote



# STEP 1: VOTER REG.....

Get to know the  
voter registration  
rules in your state



# STEP 1: VOTER REG.....

- Publicize and promote voter registration deadlines and how-to's
- Announce registration deadlines at events, in newsletters, in e-blasts or on your website.
- Talk about registering to vote at staff or board meetings. Ask new staff if they are registered to vote.
- Put up posters advertising voter registration deadlines, along with where to get and return voter registration forms





# STEP 1: VOTER REG.....

- Conduct In-Agency Voter Registration
  - Train staff members who have direct contacts with community members
  - Assign a staff member to plan and direct voter registration activities
  - Make voter registration forms available and offer voter registration to new clients at intake
  - Designate a staff person to promptly return forms to your Local Election Office



# **STEP 2: VOTER ED**.....

Promote the when, where and how of voting



# STEP 2: VOTER ED.....

- Knowledge About the Voting Process
  - Voting takes basic skills not always learned in school or from families. Nonprofits are trusted messengers that can help voters with messages and assistance about the when, where and how of voting.
  - If you help one person vote, they're likely to spread that knowledge to families, friends or neighbors.



# STEP 2: VOTER ED.....

- Confidence about Casting a Ballot
  - A big reason many people don't vote is fear of failure. No one wants to make a mistake voting or go to vote unsure of their choices. Voters have more confidence when they know the candidates or issues in at least one key race on the ballot. After voting once, it becomes easier to be a repeat voter.
  - Many voters who are registered still lack the confidence or knowledge to take the time to vote in the election.



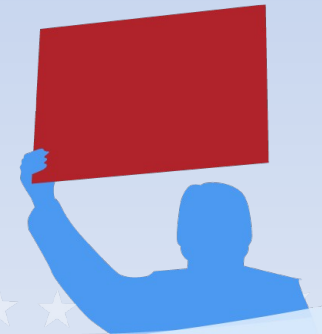
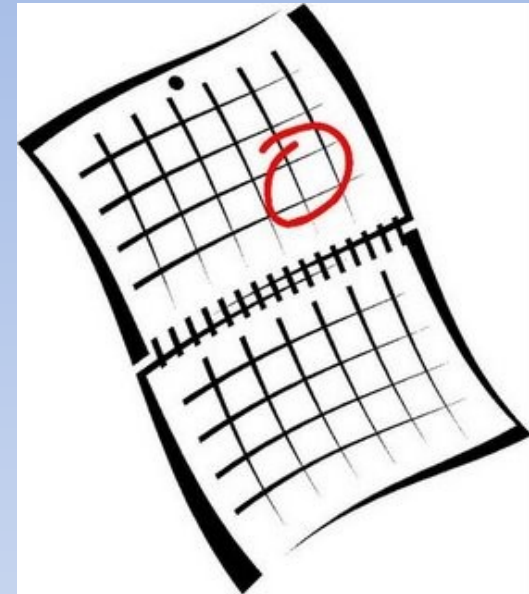
# STEP 2: VOTER ED.....

- Urgency and Importance
  - Above all, voters benefit from a reason to vote\*  
Research shows that voters are much more likely to vote when they sense something at stake - to gain or to lose. And they believe the vote not just of themselves but of their peers or community will make a difference.
  - The urgency and importance your nonprofit communicates will make a difference in how your staff and constituents view voting



# STEP 2: VOTER ED

- When
  - Election date, Deadline to vote by mail or vote early, Polling hours
- Where
  - Polling places, Early voting locations
- How
  - How to vote absentee or early in-person,
- Where to get help voting, ID requirements



## California

Clicking on the buttons below will take you to the appropriate page of your state's elections division's website. The following information was provided in cooperation with the National Association of Secretaries of State and their [Can I Vote](#) project.

[Register to Vote](#)

[Check your Registration](#)

[Find your Polling Place](#)

[Learn about Voter ID](#)

[Absentee/Vote-by-Mail](#)

[Become a Poll Worker](#)



**Elections Contacts**

State Elections  
Division

**Local Elections Offices**

**Find More Resources Here**



Click here to find  
downloadable fact  
sheets, checklists,  
posters, guides and  
more.

## County and City Elections Offices

Clicking on the links below will take you to elections offices in a particular county or city.

[Alameda County's Registrar of Voters](#)

[Los Angeles County Registrar](#)

[Orange County Registrar of Voters](#)

## Election Calendar

**OCT/NOV 2010**

S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	1	2				

**Register by Oct. 18th**

**Election Day Nov. 2nd**

**Polling Place Hours**

**7:00am - 8:00pm**



Learn about voting  
in your state.

In cooperation with the  
National Association of  
Secretaries of State

Choose your state





# STEP 2: VOTER ED.....

- Sample activities:
  - Hold a mock election at your nonprofit
  - Teach voting vocabulary words
  - Discuss the principles of a fair democracy or fair election.
  - Pass out voter registration forms or sample ballots
  - Cover specifics for your area
    - what races are on the ballot
    - how to vote
    - polling place locations
    - ballot initiatives.



# STEP 2: VOTER ED.....

- Special Activities
  - Make it a party: Hold a special event about the election for one of your programs.
  - Discuss the election with those who are not citizens and ways they can participate as a volunteer or helping others vote.
  - Make sure ex- offenders understand their right to vote in their state.



# STEP 2: VOTER ED.....

- Sample Ballots
  - A sample ballots help voters feel more comfortable with the process of voting and have more confidence going to cast their ballot. Print out copies and post them in your lobby, or have a stack of them available in waiting rooms and intake areas.



# STEP 2: VOTER ED.....

- Candidate Questionnaires and Voter Guides
  - Checkout our online guide “Nonprofits, Voting and Elections” to learn about creating your own questionnaires and guides
  - Distribute questionnaires and guides from other organizations like a nonprofit coalition or local League of Women Voters



# STEP 3: GOTV



# STEP 3: GOTV.....

- Principles of GOTV
  - Make it Personal
  - Get Voters the Help They Need
  - Turn up the (Nonpartisan) Volume



# STEP 3: GOTV.....

- Create Visibility

- The election should be visible to everyone who walks into your agency or attends any of your trainings or events
- Put up Vote November 2 signage – posters, flyers, etc
  - throughout the lobby and all public spaces
- Make announcements or hold discussions at meetings, events, classes, etc
- Encourage media popular with the people you serve to promote the election and where voters can find help





# STEP 3: GOTV

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- Provide Help
  - Help your constituents succeed in voting. Once a voter, they'll be more likely after the election to follow issues and participate in community affairs
  - Orient staff to answer basic election questions or where a voter can get help voting
  - When providing services, ask people if they're planning to vote and if they need help
  - Help people vote early – 1 of 3 voters are early voters
  - Advertise rides to the polls or where to get help
  - Call a list of your constituents about voting with help from volunteers





# STEP 3: GOTV.....

- On Election Day
  - Make Election day special. Treat it like day both of political importance and time celebrate democracy
  - Allow staff to spend part or all of Election Day doing nonpartisan get out the vote activities
  - Encourage your staff and volunteers to sign up as poll workers or translators
  - Ask everyone you connect with if they've voted or need help voting
  - Put up big "Vote Today" signs with a number to call or place to go for help
  - Have an Election day party



# MORE RESOURCES.....

**More Resources at [www.nonprofitvote.org](http://www.nonprofitvote.org)**

**Webinar page** – Download or view past webinars

**Nonprofit Voter Participation Starter Kit** – Order free copy

**501c3 Online Guide to Nonpartisan Voter Participation** – Soon to be available as a narrated online training presentation

**Hosting a Candidate Forum** – Download the print publication or watch the narrated online training presentation

**Learn About Voting in Your State** – State by state voting information provided in cooperation with the National Association of Secretaries of State

**Fact sheets, checklists** and more

## **Coming Soon**

Posters for nonprofit agencies

Links to voter guides and sample ballots (coming in September)

